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Senate

The Senate met at noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, You are our shelter from the storm. Keep us from shame.

Lord, You often answer prayers in mysterious ways. As the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are Your thoughts higher than our contemplation.

Inspire our Senators to be so sensitive to Your Spirit that they can recognize Your gentle nudge. Make them glad that You are near.

Lord, equip our lawmakers with wisdom and foresight for these challenging times. May Your peace go with them as they seek to do Your will.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, it is nice to see you back in that position.

Yesterday, Mr. President, we began a new chapter in the history of our Nation. On the same steps stormed by domestic terrorists 2 weeks ago, we held a ceremony to the enduring power of our democracy. It was a symbol to the world that America is back and a mes-

sage to those domestic terrorists that they will never prevail.

Even as the festivities were in full swing, our new President and this new Senate commenced the work of rebuilding our country and healing its wounds. With the stroke of a pen, President Biden started the process of rejoining the United States to the Paris accords. He extended the pause on student loan payments, put an end to the Muslim travel ban, reinstalled safeguards for our Nation's Dreamers, and put a halt on the ineffective border wall.

Crucially, President Biden signed a number of orders to refocus the Federal Government's efforts on fighting the coronavirus pandemic. The United States has rejoined the World Health Organization. A mask mandate has been issued for all Federal properties. And President Biden has named a new coronavirus response coordinator to manage vaccine distribution, which is so desperately needed and was such a failure under the Trump administration.

Our country has suffered deeply from the chaotic, lackluster, and incompetent Federal response to COVID-19. As we cross the grim milestone of 400,000—American fatalities from COVID, the Biden administration is wasting no time in marshaling the resources of the Federal Government into action and today released a national strategy to defeat the pandemic.

What a concept—a President who actually takes the defining crisis of our time seriously. What a change—and how great is the need.

Here in the Senate, the first order of business is to fulfill our constitutional duty to advise and consent on the President's appointments to his Cabinet. Last night, the Senate confirmed the President's selection for the Director of National Intelligence, Avril Haines. We appreciate the bipartisan cooperation to get her confirmation done yesterday, and we should continue in that spirit today.

Traditionally, the Senate has confirmed several national security nominees for an incoming administration during their first few days. Even as power changes hands from one administration to the other, the work of keeping our Nation safe must not be paused or be disrupted. Foreign adversaries will seek to exploit this period of transition, and we cannot allow America's military, intelligence, and national security policy to be disrupted by staffing delays.

In 2017, President Trump had his Defense Secretary and Secretary of Homeland Security in place on Inauguration Day. President Biden deserves his national security team in place as soon as possible, as well as key officials in charge of responding to the current health and economic crises. With the cooperation of our Republican colleagues, we can and should confirm the Secretaries of Defense, State, Homeland Security, and Treasury without much delay.

While national security is paramount, I would remind my colleagues that we are in the middle of an economic crisis. The sooner we confirm a Treasury Secretary, the better.

And so, as we begin the process of bringing our country back together, let the first week of this Congress be a collaboration between our two parties to confirm President Biden's Cabinet.

INAUGURAL CEREMONY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Inaugural Ceremony proceedings be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the proceedings of the Inaugural Ceremony were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

INAUGURAL CEREMONY

Inauguration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., January 20, 2021, 10:33 a.m.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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